

Name: _____ Date: _____

BROADCAST NEWS – *MAD CITY* ASSIGNMENT

Movies are a powerful marriage of image and sound, an exciting yet complex means of affecting how we feel and even how we think. While many of us understand something about the books we read or the music we hear, we do not necessarily understand as much about the films we see.

Mad City, starring John Travolta and Dustin Hoffman, is a powerful story of abused power, questionable ethics, and victims of the news. In the film, an impudent reporter stumbles onto an inadvertent hostage taking in a museum. The reporter exploits the gunman's simple-mindedness and the news media's appetite for sensation to promote his own career. In the process, he thoughtlessly endangers the hostage and compromises the integrity of news reporting.

The Task

Write a structured report answering the following questions, using the bold headlines given to you as a method of organizing your responses. Each response section should contain a paragraph response to the questions outlined below. Submissions should be 2-3 pages in length, and should be typed, double spaced, in 12 point Times New Roman font. Remember to include MLA headings and page numbers, but for this report you do not need to include a works cited page.

Elements used by Max Bracket to construct his news story

What does Max say to get his news director to contradict his own better judgement? What does Max say to get Sam to prevent him from giving himself up to the police? What does Max say to the police chief to allow him to continue controlling the new story? What does Max say to the museum curator to get her to go along with endangering the lives of the hostages?

In essence, Max uses the same strategy with all four individuals so he may get what he wants. What characteristic in each of the four individuals exists that Max is appealing to for his own selfish purposes?

Endorsements

During the hostage taking, a sports equipment store provides free pizza and sparkling soled shoes for the children. Why does the store give away free pizza and shoes? Is it ethical for the store to behave in this way?

An American story

What is it about America's culture of violence and media coverage that makes it hard to believe that *Mad City* could have occurred anywhere but in the United States? If the director is making a comment about American culture, what is that statement?

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Dress for success

Laurie, Max's assistant, changes her appearance several times during the story. What does her change tell us about the lure of celebrity and power?

The television set as a character in the movie

While the film is about the relationship between a reporter and a hostage taker, it is even more about our relationship to television news reporting. The television itself becomes a character in the movie, revealing crucial information to characters just as if it were a friend or colleague.

Provide three important moments where the television communicates key information and influences the events in the story. Is the television partially responsible for the events at the end of the film, or is it neutral?

The title

Mad City may be interpreted as being either an angry city, or an insane city. Which meaning of "mad" is most appropriate? Is the anger, or insanity, healed by the end of the film? Ultimately, who is responsible for the film? Max? Sam? Television? Ourselves?

The following rubric will be used to evaluate your work:

CRITERIA	LEVEL R (0-4 MARKS)	LEVEL 1 (5 MARKS)	LEVEL 2 (6 MARKS)	LEVEL 3 (7 MARKS)	LEVEL 4 (8-10 MARKS)
Demonstrate an understanding of a variety of media texts	Response is not submitted, is incomplete, and/or does not contain any amount of insight or analysis	Response contains a limited amount of insightful thoughts, and does not contain any analysis	Response contains a limited amount of insightful thoughts, which do not contain much analysis	Response contains insightful thoughts which are reflective and sometimes analytical	Response contains insightful responses illustrating highly reflective and analytical thoughts
Use editing, proofreading, and publishing skills and strategies, and knowledge of language conventions, to correct errors, refine expression, and present their work effectively	Response is not submitted, is submitted but is incomplete, and/or is not formatted under appropriate headings, and/or contains many spelling and grammar errors	Response is not formatted under appropriate headings, and contains several spelling and grammar errors	Response is sometimes formatted under appropriate headings, and contains some spelling and grammar errors	Response is formatted under appropriate headings, and is mostly free of spelling and grammar errors	Response is clearly formatted under appropriate headings, and is virtually free of spelling and grammar errors

Total: ____/20